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means for preferentially breaking said valve body along a predetermined location in response to applied force, such that said valve body lumen splits open upon breaking;

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means for coupling said valve body to said peel-away sheath for coupling said peel-away sheath lumen to said valve body lumen;

means for receiving a compressible valve sleeve;

a compressible valve sleeve having a proximal end, a distal end, and a lumen adapted to receive a distal portion of a medical device; and

means for compressing said valve sleeve for restricting any fluid flow from said peel-away sheath lumen through said valve and valve sleeve lumen, said proximal end of said compressible valve sleeve extending proximal of said means for compressing said valve sleeve.

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3. (Twice Amended) A breakaway valve for a tubular peel-away sheath, said sheath having an external surface, a lumen, and a proximal end comprising:

means for reversibly restricting fluid flow from said sheath lumen coupled to said sheath proximal end, wherein said means for reversibly restricting fluid flow includes a compressible valve sleeve and means for compressing said valve sleeve, said valve sleeve having a proximal end and a distal end and a lumen therethrough, the proximal end of said valve sleeve extending proximal of said means for reversibly restricting fluid flow and adapted to admit a catheter distal end into said valve sleeve lumen; and

means for breaking apart said fluid flow restricting means responsive to applied force.

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12. (Once Amended) An introducer sheath assembly for introducing a catheter distally into a human body comprising:

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a tubular, distal introducer sheath having a proximal region and a lumen therethrough, said sheath having at least one longitudinal strip for preferentially tearing said sheath along said strip;

a tubular, compressible, proximal valve sleeve having a proximal region, a distal region, and a lumen therethrough; and

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a valve body having a lumen therethrough and being sealingly coupled to said introducer sheath proximal region, said valve having at least one weakened region for preferentially splitting said valve into at least two pieces responsive to an applied breaking force, said valve body having a seat for mating to said proximal valve sleeve distal region, said valve body including a pinch member for pinching said flexible valve sleeve and having a closed position for constricting fluid flow through said valve sleeve and an open position for admitting a catheter inserted through said valve sleeve; wherein said proximal region of said proximal valve sleeve extends proximal of said pinch member and is adapted to receive a medical device.

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15. (Once Amended) A breakaway valve body for restricting flow from a peel-away introducer sheath having a proximal region and a lumen therethrough comprising:

a breakaway distal portion having a lumen therethrough for receiving said introducer sheath proximal region; and

a proximal portion including two opposed valve body members, at least one of which is movable relative to the other and having concave surfaces therebetween for receiving a flexible valve sleeve therebetween, said valve body opposed members having an open position and a closed position, wherein said valve body members move apart relative to each other to reach said open position and said valve body opposed members move together relative to each other to

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reach said closed position, wherein said flexible sleeve has a lumen therethrough adapted to receive a medical device, said flexible sleeve having a proximal end, and a distal end, said proximal end extending proximal of said body members, said sleeve being compressible, and said sleeve and sleeve lumen are constricted between said body members in said closed position, such that fluid flow through said sleeve is substantially restricted in said closed position.

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